CORRECTED INTERVIEW

Interview with **MAX BERRY**
Interviewed by Betty KING

Max Berry was the Chairman of the Finance Committee for Marion Barry's 1978 campaign. He has been a power in DC politics as a strategist and fund raiser since the 1960. Max is an international attorney in private practice. He and his wife, Heidi, were notable art collectors and were responsible together with Ann Kinney for recruiting prominent DC artists such as Sam Gilliam and Lou Stovall to contribute prints to sell for the campaign.

21 OCTOBER 2015

INTERVIEWER: Okay, now we can begin.

MAX BERRY: All right.

INTERVIEWER: Today is October 21, 2015. My name is Betty King. And I'm talking to Max Berry.

Max, when did you come to the District?

MAX BERRY: 1960. I was starting a 3-year career on the Army JAG [Judge Advocate General] Corps at the Pentagon. So I was in the International Affairs Division of the Army JAG on a special project for 10 officers, and it was exciting for me to start my career in D.C. with the city I loved, having been here a couple of times before. And I was a political science major, so all the mishmash that happens in Washington was of interest. And so I was excited to come. And as we all know, it's a beautiful city, so if nothing else—

INTERVIEWER: Absolutely.

MAX BERRY: And all the museums are virtually free, not every one, but that's great when you're single and broke.

INTERVIEWER: And when did you meet Marion Barry?

MAX BERRY: You know, I tell you, I was practicing law, after 7 years, 3 in the JAG Corps and 4 in the General Counsel's Office at the Treasury Department. I then in my seventh or eighth year went into private practice, and I shared space with an Assistant Secretary of Treasury, former, in the international field. We both did the same kind of stuff. He was established; I was brand-

new. And we were both—I shared space with him in the Brawner Building, which is at 17th and I.

INTERVIEWER: Of course, I remember, yeah.

MAX BERRY: And Farragut Square is just catty-corner.

INTERVIEWER: Exactly. I know exactly where it is.

MAX BERRY: And in those days, I wasn't having so many business lunches, or lunches at all, I was bringing my lunch and going into Farragut Square and looking at the birds and the pretty girls and tuna fish sandwiches.

[Laughter.]

MAX BERRY: You know I was a bachelor. And, let's see, was I a bachelor then? No, no, no, no. I was married, recently married. And I met Marion Barry, he was standing in the park in a dashiki shirt, an African wardrobe—

INTERVIEWER: Right.

MAX BERRY: —speaking to anybody who would speak to him. It was almost like London in Hyde Park, only he wasn't crazy or anything, he was just talking about the District. I was interested in the District, I was living in the District, I was in Georgetown.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MAX BERRY: And I was at Georgetown [University], and when I was in the Army, I went to Georgetown at night and got a master's degree in international trade and law. And so they rented me a house dirt cheap because I agreed not to complain if they wanted to take it over as an office. And we both benefited by that. And so I was already doing some stuff while I was even in the Government on home rule. You know, Sterling Tucker [at that time at the Urban League, later the first City Council chairman after Home Rule] and other people who were in that early version of home rule and lobbying.

INTERVIEWER: "Free D.C."

MAX BERRY: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MAX BERRY: And some good friends. And so I got glimpses of the politicians involved, but when I—Marion was not an elected official, he was just making statements, and he was getting ready to run for the School Board, as I recall.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MAX BERRY: And we talked a little bit, and then he saw I knew something about political science, and I saw he did, and I was immediately sort of impressed because I thought I was going to get some of the wild guy to try to sell me something ridiculous, and I could tell he was a man of intelligence even though he looked a little funny to start with. We don't in Oklahoma have too many people like that in the park talking to you.

[Laughter.]

MAX BERRY: But he told me to come down to some office and continue the dialogue. And that was on about our second and third visit, it wasn't on the first one, but he would be there a lot when I was having lunch.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MAX BERRY: And I did eventually go down there. It was someplace downtown, on 12th and Connecticut Avenue, I forget where, and that's where I met Ivanhoe Donaldson [Marion's chief of staff and in 1978 his campaign manager]. It was sort of a cheap little office somewhere, and we just talked, just talked. And then something about Marion and the School Board or something and District politics and elections and the cost of money to run.

[Laughter.]

MAX BERRY: And I was interested in Marion Barry only from the standpoint that I had met him in the park and he made some sense, but we weren't friends particularly, but I think he was cultivating almost anybody who would talk to him, and I really wanted to talk to him.

INTERVIEWER: He was a great wooer. He liked people—you know, to get people involved and to woo them.

MAX BERRY: Effi Barry [Marion's wife whom he married in summer 1978] once told me—I mean, I've had all kinds of experiences with Marion, and I think he ended up liking me, although there was a period of time where he didn't when I resigned, but Effi told me that Marion was really just a good old boy who wanted you to come over for coffee in the morning, he'd put his feet up on the table and he'd want to schmooze about something, and that was the essence of the man, that he was interested in everybody and interested in all the issues, but he wasn't someone who was going to sell you a vacuum cleaner.

INTERVIEWER: No.

MAX BERRY: So that's how it all started.

INTERVIEWER: Now, did you support him in his run for the School Board?

MAX BERRY: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Did you campaign for him? Did you raise money for him?

MAX BERRY: I raised a little money. It wasn't easy to raise money for Marion Barry. Most of the people that I knew were afraid of him—you know?—or had some reason to not respond to him favorably.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MAX BERRY: So I think I gave something like 250 or 500, and that may have been the limit, and I raised a couple of dollars from my brother-in-law and things like that, but I certainly wasn't one of the major people. I was on sort of the periphery of a lot of other people.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. And then a few years later when he ran for the City Council, you were supporting him then as well?

MAX BERRY: Yes. I had seen enough of him on the School Board to like a lot of things about him and not like everything about him. You know, he was a politician, he was pleasing a lot of people, but I never thought he was unintelligent in any of his views. I always knew, or I thought I knew, the sort of angle that Marion was working. But, yeah, I supported him. And I was living in Georgetown, and I tried to get some other people. I got a few. It was hard to raise money for Marion even in the Mayor's race at first.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Yes. It got easier after the primary.

MAX BERRY: Yeah, but people were more responsive to Sterling [Tucker, City Council Chairman), and the old corps were more responsive to Walter [Washington, incumbent Mayor of DC].

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Now, on the 1978 campaign, you were the Finance chair, weren't you?

MAX BERRY: Treasurer and Finance chair. I was too naive not to be treasurer, so I really learned not to do that job.

[Laughter.]

MAX BERRY: Although I had already—you know, Betty, I had already done it with [Walter] Fauntroy [the first DC Delegate to Congress elected in 1971], that was my first race. That was the first race in the District.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

MAX BERRY: And I was Fauntroy's—first his treasurer and Finance chairman, and then in his next term, I was his chair. Once again, I had the pride of being the Finance chairman and raised the least amount of money of the three candidates.

[Laughter.]

MAX BERRY: And Walter [Washington] was definitely in third place [in the 1974 race to be the first elected DC Mayor after Home Rule], according to a *U.S. News and World Report* story early on, and it was Channing Phillips and Joe Yeldell [Washington's opponents in that race]. Well, Channing had a lot of liberals in the third ward who liked him, for good reason, he was a wonderful man.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

MAX BERRY: Joe had a lot of businesspeople who liked him for good and bad reasons. And I liked Walter. I had met him, coincidently, and we started with a campaign of about six people, Ed Mozique, Bishop Smallwood Williams, Billy Simpson, Max Berry, and two other—John Hechinger [CEO of Hechinger's chain of home improvement stores], and a Jewish guy named Barry Rosenberg, who dropped out the second week, claiming to have delivered me to the campaign, so he didn't have to do any more. So that's how we started. And that was the first campaign.

INTERVIEWER: And Walter won, proving yet again that it isn't necessarily all the money, it's the boots on the ground, it's the ground game.

MAX BERRY: Well, you know, you'll remember these days. One of the key missions—and anybody in the District who cared about the District and politics could join—would be to get rid of [John L.] McMillan [Congressman from South Carolina from 1939-1973], who was chairman of the House Committee on the District {almost every year from 1945 until he was defeated in 1973].

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MAX BERRY: Okay. A bigot from the South, Mississippi, and that was when Walter coined the expression "the power of arithmetic," and that was before Dave Abramson coined the song *He's Going To Get It All Together*, which I vetoed, but it nevertheless stuck, and I was wrong, it was actually popular, but not so much with the third ward crowd that I was in, but all the guys in the Pentagon with the little bikes and all the people in the seventh and eighth ward, it had a jive to it that I later understood better. But that was my first entry into D.C. politics, and the truth is I learned a lot because Hechinger and I really worked the town, and I can't tell you how many big company representatives in Washington or big developers in Washington, household names, all white, turned us down. My first big contribution was from the Ford Motor Company representative, who was black, and he gave me $500, I remember, and he almost kept it out of sight of his other Motor Company representatives.

But I learned about racial bigotry in just raising money in a town run by whites traditionally by appointment, waiting for home rule. God, I wonder where some of those home rule people are now, probably not living. But anyway, but, okay, that's—so when I went into that Marion Barry sort of area, I wasn't a complete neophyte in D.C. politics, and I'm still loyal to Walter [Washington]. I was going to meetings with Walter, and I was actually organizing fundraisers for him around the town. The black community sort of got to know me pretty quickly through Walter and his wife and his children and whatever. I had a wonderful friendship with Bishop Smallwood Williams, whom I really admired, and at John Wilson's funeral, Peggy Cafritz was sort of controlling who got in, and there was the Bishop's daughter, Yvonne, who was a good friend of mine from way back, and a wonderful lady. As I was walking in with some people that were on the approved list, you know, at this smaller than National Cathedral, because John would have preferred National Cathedral, and we would have, his good friends, part of his good friends, because everyone could get in who wanted to get in, and John wouldn't have wanted to keep people out. Well, Yvonne comes up to me as I'm walking in and she says, "I can't get in. They won't let me. I'm not on the approved list."

INTERVIEWER: No.

MAX BERRY: And I said, "Just grab my arm, you're coming in with me." And the one person in D.C. politics, ever since I turned her down out of loyalty for [former Ward 6 City Councilwoman] Betty Ann Kane, who has not liked me at all, was our congress lady [Eleanor Holmes Norton], and when she saw Yvonne coming in for some reason—I don't know what the history is—she sort of started to tell me that I couldn't do that or something, and I looked at her and I said, "Just don't say it," and she backed off because I didn't think she wanted a confrontation. I never did anything to her, but she never liked me. She came to my office with one of the big black lawyers and was startled that I told her why I couldn't support her, that I already was loyal to Betty Ann. I knew she [Betty Ann] wasn't going to win, but I kept my word.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Yeah.

MAX BERRY: It really didn't have anything to do with her, but now that I know her well, I was glad I kept my word. I don't like her very much.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. So it seemed to me that you and Ann Kinney [1978 campaign staffer who worked with the Finance Committee] used all sorts of ploys to—I mean, I was busy giving parties from one end of town to the other, and you all were doing things like—who was it who got Sam Gilliam and Lou Stovall—

MAX BERRY: Me.

INTERVIEWER: It was you?

MAX BERRY: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: To do the prints?

MAX BERRY: And I got Ann Kinney. Ann Kinney came up to me—we're good friends, we still are—I'm very much in the art world with her, and I'm going to be with her at New York City, a fundraiser for the Archives of American Art. It's part of the Smithsonian. I used to chair it. And I'll be with her in 2 weeks in New York at Gilbert [Kinney}'s…. [Coughing] I've got bronchitis.

INTERVIEWER: Me, too.

MAX BERRY: It's not contagious.

INTERVIEWER: No problem.

MAX BERRY: Ann came up to me during the first Marion-Sterling-Walter race and said, "What should I do? I want to get into D.C. politics. Who should I—who are you supporting?" I said, "I haven't decided." She said, "Will you tell me who you're going to support and then get me in the campaign?" I said, "Yes, of course, I will. You'll be great."

INTERVIEWER: Now, wasn't she working for Marion at that time?

MAX BERRY: No, no.

INTERVIEWER: Oh.

MAX BERRY: Not at all. No. Definitely not. Definitely not. Like I said, "I don't know who I'm supporting." She said she'll wait and I should let her know. About—and when I would come out of buildings, like the District Building or I think then I might have been either still at the Brawner Building or I was at the Mills Building at 1700 Pennsylvania Avenue—there would be a

limousine out there idling, and it would either be Sterling or Marion, and Walter somehow didn't do that, and I was on his first team. I did not support Cliff Alexander [when he ran for Mayor in 1974], to his great surprise, because he was in the Fauntroy campaign, and we were friends.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MAX BERRY: And I told him why I didn't support him, and he didn't like it. But I said Walter at least loves the District and has done some things for it. This is the first race between Cliff and—

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MAX BERRY: And I said, "Cliff, I'm going to be honest with you. If you had a meeting on Oklahoma Avenue, Southeast, you would call me or someone else up and say, 'How do I get there?'"

[Laughter.]

MAX BERRY: No, it's true.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MAX BERRY: I said, "You and Adele are federal people, you're Northwest D.C. people, and you don't know the District and you've not done anything for it, you haven't aspired to do anything for it, and now you're going to run for Mayor. That just doesn't cut it with me." He started the conversation by saying not, "Hello," "Max, I'm going with Adele to the Caribbean at Christmas, and when we come back, I want you to have an account set up for my campaign and have at least between 50- and $100,000 in it so we can get on." And I said, "Cliff, this is going to surprise you a great deal, and I'm really sorry to tell you, I'm supporting Walter Washington." I was on his main committee. I liked Walter.

INTERVIEWER: A very classy guy.

MAX BERRY: Now, the second time around, I was with Polly and everybody else [in opposing Walter Washington]. We just couldn't have another 4 years of that sort of lethargic and semi-improper kind of dealings.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. It was if we were still an agency of the Federal Government instead of having home rule, quote/unquote.

MAX BERRY: I used to tell people about home rule because some of my Federal friends in Congress would come up and say, "Hey, it's been 3 years. You guys are—we should use

Marion's name. We are bumbling and stumbling all over the place." I said, "Look, you're from St. Louis, Missouri. You've been around 200 years. We've been around 3 years, so give us a break." Now, Betty, it's a little hard to say, "Hey, we've only been around for 68 or 75 years."

[Laughter.]

MAX BERRY: But, yeah. I mean, we didn't have home rule for a long time after home rule. That's a perception again that's true. And to some extent we still don't.

INTERVIEWER: To a great extent.

MAX BERRY: To a greater extent.

INTERVIEWER: No. But, now, so the primary is over and we've won by that much, maybe less than that.

MAX BERRY: That was the caper. Do you know about the caper?

INTERVIEWER: No. Oh, you mean the Saturday night massacre? What? What caper? Tell.

MAX BERRY: What got Marion Barry elected. And this is all 100 percent true, it's no BS. The only person who might disagree with it, if they can remember that far back, is Ivanhoe. I never won an argument with Ivanhoe, ever—

INTERVIEWER: No?

MAX BERRY: —with Marion except one time. This came after a lot of problems I had with Marion, but I was still there, I think I was still his chairman. And what was I then? The first campaign, I was, I guess, his—

INTERVIEWER: '78, the caper.

MAX BERRY: Yeah, but I guess I was his treasurer and Finance chairman.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MAX BERRY: And I wasn't his chairman yet. Okay.

INTERVIEWER: Or maybe you were. I can't remember.

MAX BERRY: I can't either. I forget when it all happened. But I was very loyal to Marion, and truthfully, at the last part of the campaign, you'll probably remember, we were not confident,

we sort of—it was about a third, a third, a third, if you wanted to gloss over it, but if you had to pick the weakest third, I think I would have probably picked Marion for certain reasons.

INTERVIEWER: You know, Florence Tate [1978 campaign press secretary] and I were absolutely the other way.

MAX BERRY: Okay. Well—

INTERVIEWER: Absolutely convinced.

MAX BERRY: —you probably had better instincts. But here's why, I wasn't surprised at the last minute when Polly, our best supporter and my dearest friend, comes and tells me before she tells a lot of other people, and Hechinger, she says, "I've got to switch over to Sterling. Marion is not going to win. He's in third place, and I cannot vote for him because Sterling has convinced me, as others, that that's a vote for Walter and Walter will win. We have to throw our support to Sterling or we get Walter for another term." Now, she was—I said, "How do you know that? Who told you that?"

INTERVIEWER: Well, I'll tell you who told her that. Lee Carvy, who was her nearest and dearest.

MAX BERRY: And Lee doesn't know that much.

INTERVIEWER: And Peter Hart [the pollster].

MAX BERRY: Really? Peter Hart? Well, he—

INTERVIEWER: That's what I understood.

MAX BERRY: Well, that surprises me because Peter and I talked a lot.

INTERVIEWER: But, you know, there wasn't a single authentic poll that showed us with any chance of winning.

MAX BERRY: I know. I know. I know. That's why I said he had great instincts. But here's what happened. I get a call late in the campaign, 3 or 4 days before the vote. John Wilson [member of the City Council from Ward 2] hasn't endorsed anyone yet. I was John Wilson's chairman then, and one of his lawyers, maybe one of his most active lawyers, getting him out of stupid contracts and a few skirmishes on the side and tried to keep quiet, and I liked John a whole lot, I mean we were really good friends.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MAX BERRY: And, anyway, so I was trying to get John to swing over to Marion, and he was playing both sides. You know, he was in a position where he didn't want to aggravate Sterling either, because he really thought, "If anybody is going to win besides Walter, it's going to be Sterling, and then I'll be on the shit list."

So I get a call from David Eaton, "Max," he says—

INTERVIEWER: All Souls Unitarian Church.

MAX BERRY: Hmm?

INTERVIEWER: Reverend David Eaton from All Souls Unitarian Church.

MAX BERRY: Unitarian Church. And we're friends, we're good friends.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MAX BERRY: Okay. And he's supporting Marion. This is why I had all my doubts, because Polly, and now I get this call from David about the same time. He said, "I'm calling you because I know I'll get nowhere with Ivanhoe," he says, "and I know Marion is not going to be able to start and give me an answer at the end," he says. "I want Marion, Sterling, and me, only the three, in my apartment tonight at midnight," and he said, "the three of us are going to have a chat." I said, "Look, David, I see through this right away. Polly has defected, you're defecting, and you're going to try to get Marion to switch over and be a hero and get Sterling elected, and Sterling has cooked this up, of course, or you have, or someone else has. And why would Marion Barry be a part of that? He's not in here to quit, he's not a quitter, and I get all that stuff." He says, "Max, I swear to God I have not defected, but I think we have to talk about it because we're going to see Walter Washington as Mayor for 4 more years. I just think we have to talk about it." "I'll get back to you, David."

Now, I hang up, and I don't call. I go over and make sure Ivanhoe and Marion are together by themselves. Now, I never won an argument with Ivanhoe. Ivanhoe is almost like his [Marion's] mother more than his father, and Ivanhoe and I got along. I mean, I got Ivanhoe a bunch of mechanical banks that I collected. He collected them and black stump speakers and jolly bags. We had a different kind of relationship, but we respected each other, and I never once thought Ivanhoe liked me, but I liked him and I respected him, and I knew he was bright as heck. So I go over there, and as soon as I throw it out, Ivanhoe was screaming, "It's a trap, Marion! Goddam it, it's a trap! What are you bringing this shit over here for?" You know, he got excited and started yelling. This is the most yelling I've ever heard him do. I said, "Of course it's a trap. I know that. I told David it's a trap. But what's the harm in going and just say no, Marion, just say no, but let's see if they would do anything. And I have one other ace up my sleeve, and it's

a little one, it's not a big one. I've talked to Polly. If we go to this meeting, because now she knows she's supporting this, she will agree to hold off her announcement until either late Friday evening or Saturday morning." "What the fuck does that mean?" he screams at me. I said, "I'll tell you what it means. It's, I said, a little ace, not a big one. The story gets in Saturday's *Post* and not Friday's. Everybody is in their office on Friday; everybody is out of town on Saturday at the beach. It's still hot weather." And that was the only reason to do that, and that was at least a little bit. So I said, "Go and just get that. Just humor me." "That's ridiculous. That's ridiculous." I said, "It's not ridiculous. Ask the people in the press if I'm not right, that Saturday is a much lesser press day for politics—

INTERVIEWER: Particularly in August, late August.

MAX BERRY: Yes, that's right. Yes. And Ivanhoe won't even admit that, and Marion is listening the whole time, and I think once again I've lost the argument. He's outshouted me. I'm the dumb one in the room. It's just I've gone through that a lot. I wasn't humiliated, I understood it, but Marion couldn't really buck his mother when she's whipping him and stuff, and that's how it was, that's just how it was. And so I was totally surprised, Betty, when Marion said, "Don't get pissed off, Ivanhoe, but I'm going to do it. Max is right, there's nothing to lose. I'm not going to say yes." And Ivanhoe still fears. Well, I don't know why. Maybe it wasn't his idea, I don't know. So, okay. I said, "Marion, call me as soon as you get out of the meeting and tell me what happens. Maybe I'll have a reason to call the *Post*." I don't know. I don't know. I had a guy I could call. He would call me at 3:00 in the morning on some shit about Marion.

So I go home, get a call before the meeting is supposed to start, and it's Marion. "I'm calling you to tell you why I'm not going to the meeting." I thought, well, okay, Ivanhoe has won. He said, "I went. I went 30 minutes early and I parked a half a block away and stayed in my car and turned off the motor and watched what happened." He said, "I had a hunch." The person that goes up the steps to David's apartment is Bob Washington [Tucker's campaign chairman]. The second guy is Harley Daniels [another Tucker supporter].

INTERVIEWER: Of course.

MAX BERRY: And then he follows with two or three other names, and then Sterling, and he says, "I went home." I said, "I can't believe David lied to me." I mean, it's one thing to have a scheme and outsmart you, but for a preacher that I respected a great deal to lie to me deliberately and already planned out kind of—I was really hurt by that. But I said, "Marion, you did the right thing. I was wrong, Ivanhoe was right, but you did the right thing." I said, "I'm going to cook something up, like I told you. It probably won't mean anything."

So I thought about it, and I remember it was about 2:00 or 2:30 when I called my friend at the *Post*, and he sort of said, "This better be good." I said, "Well, it's never so good when you call me and wake me up. I wonder why you have this higher standard," and he laughed, he

laughed. And he said, "What is it?" "I just want to tell you something," and I tell him the story. And I said I was hurt personally that I would be lied to, I was hurt that I would recommend to Marion something that was obviously a trap, and I even told him it was, but I thought there was a shred of hope that this was a genuine kind of meeting. But here's how it plays. Sterling Tucker and Bob Washington and Harley Daniels, not so popular with some people, tried to bully poor little old Marion Barry," I didn't say it that way, but that's how I said it in my expression, tried to bully him to resign from the race and endorse Sterling. And Marion is the kind of man, whether you know it or not, that's too strong to be bullied, and we're in this race to win, for God's sakes, so it was an insult. But I just want you to know that this was the plan, and it didn't happen, but you're getting the scoop what was attempted," and I figured this was worth a dime in the newspaper.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

MAX BERRY: And he said to me, "It's like a caper, isn't it?" I said, "You're goddam right it's like a caper, but it didn't work." Headline in the *Post* the next day, "Tucker's Caper Fails," something like that.

[Laughter.]

MAX BERRY: John Wilson gets wind of it in the morning, and he calls me, and there's no cell phones in those days.

INTERVIEWER: No.

MAX BERRY: I'm up in Maryland for the National Commission on the Arts with Bill running it, talking, I was giving advice to the board, the Maryland Opera Company, on how to survive bankruptcy. It's sort of a common thing that three or four of us did for the Endowment in the Washington area. And all these nonprofits to this day even have the same disease, the same kind of thing, the terrible boards that don't give any money, and they're old people that want all the prestige and all that, but the same old kind of problems. So, anyway, I was there, and so my—I was coming back and I heard on the news, "John Wilson is going to make an announcement at noon." And I thought, "What's he making an announcement about?" And this was right on my mind, of course, because I was excited about it. So I stopped and go into a drug store, and I call John, I had his private number, and he said, "Have you heard this about—," I said, "Yeah, John, I know all about it." "It's the caper. Is that what you—," "Yeah," I said. "That was a chicken shit thing for Sterling and those guys to do, David Eaton." I said, "I thought it was a bit more than chicken shit," and then I just really told him how hurt I was and let down and that this would be a kind of thing and Marion was above all this, you know. I get there in time to hear John's announcement, he waves to me, I mean, I was barely there in time. And so John endorses Marion and he knocks the hell out of the caper. And this is the funny end of this because Marion wins. And most of the pundits at that time—it's forgotten now—gave the

caper the reason he just went over the line. He didn't win by much, but it was enough probably of getting votes, people who were undecided saying, "Well, that was nasty, that was Sterling."

And so now we're at the prayer breakfast, it could be called a victory breakfast, and I'm actually moderating it and trying to keep Joe Yeldell from stealing money, from having entertainment where he's getting kickbacks, and it's all almost unbelievable, who really wasn't our friend. And anyway, I opened it up by saying, "Yes, it was a close campaign, and I know right now Marion is talking to me and others about helping his friends who did not win this campaign get out of debt." He would want to help them raise money to get out of debt, which was true.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MAX BERRY: It pissed us all off, but it was true. We were tired of raising money, to have to go out and start raising money for Sterling, pretty hard. Anyway, I said—we were in the last minutes of the campaign, we tried everything, we raised as much money as we could, we had as many loyalties as we could, we were getting some defections, it was very discouraging. There was really nothing left for us to do, we couldn't think of anything, and then all of a sudden we thought of the one last thing that we could do, and I did this three or four times. I said we prayed to God. We got down on our knees and we prayed to God, and God delivered David Eaton.

[Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: Was David there?

MAX BERRY: Yeah. And for the first—the crowd just roared because by now they had read the *Post*.

[Laughter.]

MAX BERRY: Then I did it two or three more times, and David and I were friends. And the phone rings, it's about a week later, and it's David. He said, "Max," he says, "you know, I've made such a mistake and I'm so sorry I made it, and I apologize all over the place, but can you do me one favor out of friendship?" "What's that, David?" "Quit telling that story."

[Laughter.]

MAX BERRY: And all this is completely forgotten, I think. Now, Ivanhoe, to, in a sense, his discredit, sort of took credit for the caper.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, he did.

MAX BERRY: I know, but he really did everything he could to not have it. And I was just lucky. I mean, I didn't think that was going to happen or anything. I thought Marion would go to the meeting, say no, and leave. A week and a day later—

INTERVIEWER: There's no question that that helped greatly, but you know the pollster from the *Post*, whose name I can no longer remember, came to see Marion 2 or 3 days after the primary, and I sat outside his office, and there was only a partial, so I could hear what they were saying.

MAX BERRY: Right. Okay.

INTERVIEWER: And he said to Marion, "How did we get it so wrong?" And Marion said, "You were polling habitual voters, and we got a lot of people to register to vote for the first time. We also got people who were already registered to vote for the first time in years," and so forth, and that was the critical difference.

MAX BERRY: Right. Yeah, yeah. Well—

INTERVIEWER: And the gay community was hugely helpful.

MAX BERRY: And, you know, someone like Ann Kinney, who would have supported Sterling, I told her, "I'm going to support Marion, and I'm going to have more fun in losing with Marion than winning with Sterling." I said, "Ann, I really think Sterling is going to win." But something about Sterling was too slick. He asked me as much as Marion. He came to me and said, "You've ended your career in the District." My career is in Denmark and France, it's not in the District, I don't make any money here. But I told Ann that I really thought if she wanted to be with the winner, that it's not going to be Marion, but that's where I'm going to be because I'll have more fun, and she said, "That's what I want to do." And we just—we worked Georgetown, and we went and got some new votes.

INTERVIEWER: But that's why—that's why we won, because there were a whole lot of people who didn't care—

MAX BERRY: I think that's right. I think you're right. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: —you know, they understood Marion's vision and what a change he would make in the politics of the District.

MAX BERRY: I think you're right. Yeah. I think you're right.

INTERVIEWER: And that translated into the fact that the people who, not only in the campaign office but in all the wards and precincts, it was like a crusade.

MAX BERRY: And the good part, Betty, because you said something when we talked earlier about—or you wrote, you made the, "You still don't like Marion," or something. Marion's first term I'd give—you know how you used to grade people? I'd give B-plus, A-minus, somewhere in there. Yeah. I wouldn't give anyone an A because too many things happen and they're not smart, and you can't control it. But Marion had a terrific first term.

INTERVIEWER: No question.

MAX BERRY: Obviously not now. A year and a half into the second term, I'd still give him B-plus, A-minus, and then things changed. This is when I got out, about 6 months later after 6 years.

INTERVIEWER: And what happened? What was the cause?

MAX BERRY: Okay. You can verify this, if they're honest, with Doug, Pat, and Del Lewis. I was meeting Marion—this is the story—I was meeting Marion routinely at different things, and one of them was I think it was Riverfest in Georgetown, we were copying Cincinnati, I think. And all of a sudden something new happened, and I couldn't figure it out. Marion is a little late. I'm there talking to the crowd that gathered, and it was about 500 people, a lot of tourists, but a lot of natives. And the boat comes around bringing Mary, Ruby McVee [ph], her husband, [can you identify these people] and five or six people I've never seen before, all in black suits, all in black hats, all in black sunglasses, and I don't know who they are. They looked a little menacing, and it pulls around, and here they come, and Marion has got to make a speech. Well, he's really plowed.

INTERVIEWER: He's what?

MAX BERRY: Plowed, he's drunk.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, god.

MAX BERRY: Yeah. The first time I ran into this, but the wrong time, this just wasn't good. And I said, "Marion, you're supposed to make a speech." "You know the speech. Goddam it, you give the speech. You can give it." And I had just given a speech for him in Chinatown, sort of the same thing. And one of the Chinese people came up to me, and I realized that midway into conversation after I made this speech that they thought I was the Mayor.

[Laughter.]

MAX BERRY: The same thing happened after Phillips [Collection, a museum in DC]—you know, when I brought Jacob Lawrence [prominent African-American painter]and his wife in to meet

Marion for the first time. I had gotten all kinds of things at Phillips for years. Wonderful man. And I was there, and I met them, and Marion was late. So I said—and I thought she heard me say the Mayor is going to be late, she must not have been listening, I don't know, but she later said, "Well, Mr. Barry, is it difficult being Mayor of Washington?"

[Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: Well, of course, because you have the same last name even though it's spelled differently.

MAX BERRY: I know, I know, I know. Anyway, anyway, so I'm startled, and I said, "Marion, can you speak in like 30 minutes, get some coffee or something? Because they really don't want to hear me." "Oh, god, you speak." So I made a speech, how this is building the new kind of economy in Washington and these kind of things grow, and Cincinnati has done it very well, and we're going to do it, it only was 1 year, unfortunately. But then when we got through and people were milling around, I went back to the boat, and I said, "What's going on, Ruby?" And these are Marion's friends from Atlanta. Then I ran into his friends from Chicago, and they looked the same. And I thought—I'm worried. I don't know who these people are.

And then I went in the office. Marion called me up. He had to talk to me. I go to the office. Pat Seldon [Marion's executive assistant] is out there, and Marion said, "You know, you represent all the French liquor business and everything but beer, I've been told." I said, "Yeah, you're right." He says, "Well, I would like you to do me a favor. I would like you to get me a case or some bottles of Rémy—that Rémy Martin, Rémy Martin. Rémy Martin. I said, "Well, you know, Marion, each bottle of that, I mean, there's XO and there's VSOP and there's VS." "Well, any of them are okay with me." He said, "I mix it with Coke."

Now, half of the market in the United States for the French was the blacks. Black people loved cognac at this time, and they put all kinds of things with it. It shocked the French, but they didn't care as long as they were buying. It was generally BS, a cheaper cognac. So I said, "I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll bring in three bottles." I said, "The thing that worries me is this gift thing. In politics, each of these bottles is worth about $20, $25 then, and, you know, it's like if you keep doing this, it's $100 here and here, and it's violating a law." And he said, "Oh, no." I said, "Well, let me bring in three bottles." Then the next time, within 2, 3 days, he asked me to bring in a case. And Pat Seldon saw me in the District Building, I was coming out of John's office or somewhere, I'm sure it was John's, I was over there more than I was over at Marion's. And I don't know if John [Wilson] was speaker —I mean the [Council] chair then or whether he was just representing the ward. But anyway, so Pat calls me in, and she says, "Max, don't give him any more of this cognac. Just tell him, no, you can't do it." And I said, "Okay. I sort of told him that, but why are you saying that?" She said, "He's not having people over and sharing it like he said, he's drinking it all himself. He's drinking a bottle a day." I said, "You're kidding me." She said, "Max, I'm worried about him."

INTERVIEWER: Oh.

MAX BERRY: Stretch forward a while in the future, when I'm sitting watching *L.A. Law* and they interrupt that program to bring a special bulletin, and it says, "Marion Barry," I thought I was going to hear his dying of a heart attack because that's what happens when you drink that much stuff.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MAX BERRY: And it said was caught in a motel and it was all that stuff about Lewis, and that was the announcement, which I was down at the police station. I don't want to tell you all the news on that one because it wouldn't be good for Marion or anybody to know some of the story there.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MAX BERRY: But he got caught red-handed again.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MAX BERRY: And what happened, Betty, is in that sixth year, maybe 5-1/2 or 6 years, these people started showing up, and I guess these people had interests that were not kosher or whatever. I know they were playing poker with him Friday, and I, from Treasury Department, knew the old customs agents who let imports in or didn't let them in were caught in a scandal because they were having poker games with the customs brokers, private people representing customs, and brokers were letting them win on purpose. So it became an extra item of income. They, I guess, kidded themselves that they were good poker players, but it was all fixed. And it got exposed, and these guys got all fired. And what I was told, whether it was David Wilmot [law professor and lobbyist] or who—I was told by somebody that Marion was playing poker every Friday night, I think it was, and they were letting him win on purpose.

INTERVIEWER: That wasn't—playing poker on Friday night was true. Let him win on purpose was not.

MAX BERRY: Okay.

INTERVIEWER: Because Stu [Long] was one of them.

MAX BERRY: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: One of the regular poker players.

MAX BERRY: And I'm sure—

INTERVIEWER: And they subpoenaed everybody, the poker players' financial records, and they found nothing.

MAX BERRY: Okay. But that's what I was told.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. No, but that was—

MAX BERRY: I believe you.

INTERVIEWER: That was the motive for the subpoenaing, the financial records of the—

MAX BERRY: Whoever told me must have told them. Yeah. I never told anybody. I mean—

INTERVIEWER: Well, no. Stu was one of the poker players. His appendix burst, he was in the hospital, he woke up, and his wife was sitting there, and she said, "Oh, look, somebody left a note in your hospital gown," and she took it out, and then, "This isn't going to make you feel good." It was a subpoena for his financial records.

MAX BERRY: Well, anyway, it wasn't good.

INTERVIEWER: No.

MAX BERRY: I mean, you know, he started—listen, George Starke [please identify him] and I, almost every other 3 days were escorting Effi [Marion's third wife] somewhere, and George would do it once, and I would do it once, just back and forth. We got to know Effi well. In her last months of living, H.R. Crawford [former Ward 7 member of the City Council] called me, and I was paying for—H.R. supposedly paying half—for her apartment rent when she was sick, and she didn't have money for the rent. [Effi was divorced from Marion in 1993; she died of leukemia in 2007]. And H.R. said, "You can help me here." And I go way back with H.R., but, I mean, I said, "Are you just doing this and you're not really paying anything, H.R.?" He said, "No, Max, I promise you." It was like $500 for the insurance.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MAX BERRY: And Effi, when we escorted her to things, it was embarrassing for us and her, too. And I would go back to Marion, and I said, "Marion, you've got to start acting like a husband and a father." And I wasn't the only one saying this, Del [Lewis] was saying it, and others, because it was getting in the *Post*. His car breaks down on the railroad tracks, he's chasing some woman. It was all embarrassing kind of stuff. He was demeaning the office after 5-1/2, 6

years of A-minus, B-plus kind of Mayor. He fell off—he didn't have much willpower, he was a playboy and all, and these guys, I guess, Betty, I don't know who they are, but I guess he got into the wrong hands and the wrong influence because he definitely wasn't the same Mayor 6 years on forward.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MAX BERRY: And then Del Lewis, Doug [Patton], Pat [Seldon], and Max Berry, they called me up, the two guys, and said, "We want you to come with us, and we're going to really let him have it," and then they said, "We want you to do the talking." I said, "Well, thanks a lot, guys. Why don't you do the talking? Del, you're great at that. Doug, you know Marion well." "Well, Max, I'll be honest with you. We've got contracts with the city, and I don't want to piss him off."

INTERVIEWER: Ah.

MAX BERRY: So I felt like talking, so it was all right. I mean, it wasn't that I didn't believe. So I said, "You know, Marion, you're not only turning from being a great Mayor to being a bad Mayor, but you're turning from being a husband to a bad husband, and being from a father who cares to being a bad father. And this is sort of serious. This is your life. And I'm really trying to appeal to your heart here." He started crying. Okay? And I said, "You've got to get back to the basics. You're the kind of guy, Marion, that everybody is going to make look bad, and they're going to end up having benefited from it, and you're going to end up with nothing." I said, "You're not on the take, in my opinion, because I've watched it, you just make other people happy. And you're sort of a strange politician that way. Most of them are on the take."

So he starts—tears were coming out of his eyes, and he says, "I hear you. You've proven yourself to be a good friend of mine." It made me feel better. He said, and you can ask Del and Doug, "Just to let you know, I'm taking Christopher to the Caribbean this weekend, we're going to have a father-son fishing trip." I said, "Is Effi going?" "I've asked her, but she's giving a speech at Hampton and she can't go," and that makes sense. We leave the room. Now, Del and Doug spoke before me, and I was analyzing everything he said. Doug or Del said to me, "Max, you really hit him this time. The guy for the first time—I think he really means it. It really sunk in." I'm very pleased to hear it. I thought it was this—I thought that, too, but when you're the guy BS-ing, you can sell yourself on your own BS.

So, okay, I go home. Guess what? I get a call at three in the morning from this guy at the *Washington Post*, and I said something like, "Why are you calling me at three in the morning?" He says, "Remember when you asked when I called you earlier and you said the Mayor was really taking a new approach to things, and he was taking Christopher on a fishing trip this weekend to the Caribbean?" I said, "Yeah." He says, "Well, you told me the truth. He did take Christopher on a fishing trip to the Caribbean this weekend." I said, "So why are you calling

me?" He says, "Well, there's a wrinkle." He said, "The Secret Service people, his security detail, they're the ones fishing with Christopher," and he said, "and they're sleeping with him in a hotel room down there, but Marion is with Aunt Bessie." She was the Lazard Freres [an international financial advisory and asset management firm] bond woman, very sexy, well-built black woman, who I knew Laissez-Faire from New York. I knew Mr. Wyle, who owned the company. I knew the family, and I had a chance to do a lot of business with them, and I walked out because I didn't like him, nothing to do with the District, and I went to Goldman Sachs.

And so I thought this is the day after I had talked to Marion. Oh, God, please. It all checked out. Marion comes back. I go back to the office. I said, "Marion, I won't stay very long, I just want you to know that I am shattered. I've lost all faith. I really—and so do Del and Doug." They weren't with me this time. We all thought there was going to be a change here, and there's no change at all. The fact that you would do that the day afterwards just says a lot to me. So I want you to know, I'm just telling you, I'm not going to make any big announcements. I'm not going to call the *Washington Post*, but I want you to know that I'm going to resign my position as chairman. I'm going to do it very quietly. I'm not going to make any statements. "Oh, fuck, Max. You'll be back in 2 weeks. What are you going to do this for? You'll be back in 2 weeks." I said, "Why will I be back in 2 weeks?" "Because you've got to be in the limelight, you've got to be"—I said, "You've misjudged me, Marion." Sort of idealistically in my heart, I really thought that a bunch of us, including me, were doing this for the city. I sort of thought the same thing with [DC Delegate Walter] Fauntroy. And I wasn't really in this for my perks or anything. I don't get anything out of the District but tax bills and things. So he scoffed at it. And then the calls start coming in from the press. And [John] Hechinger had made a statement criticizing Marion, as a supporter. And Marion made a statement. I'll never forget the media met me outside of 7089. We had had a PPAG meeting, it was Professional Association of [what?]—and I'm coming out. And the guy from Channel 7—

INTERVIEWER: Oh, yeah.

MAX BERRY: Bruce—

INTERVIEWER: Bruce Johnson.

MAX BERRY: Yeah, catches me, he's waiting. "Do you think Marion Barry is anti-Semitic from the remark he made?" I said, "What are you talking about?" "You haven't heard?" I said, "No. I've been in a meeting for 3, 4 hours." "Well, Marion said he had two Jewish supporters that were not loyal to him, and he's going to cut their legs off at their knees." It's on the record, it's in the *Post*, on the radio station. His question to me—and this is the first time I've heard it—he says, "Do you think Marion Barry is anti-Semitic?" I said, "I really don't. I don't know. I don't know." I said, "I really don't think he's anti-Semitic. I think Marion is aggravated with us for the moment and he's just sort of lashed out to punish us or to say how mad he is at us and all that. It's a momentary thing. I don't think Marion has an anti-Semitic bone in his body." That's what

I said. And he didn't write anything about it, so I guess he was satisfied. But that was a bad statement for John [Hechinger] and—

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MAX BERRY: It was John and me he was talking about. So then the *Post* starts calling me, "Marion Barry says that you've deserted him in a time of need. He was counting on you to do some things, and you've deserted him for other political interests, conflicting interests." All of a sudden I'm getting a bad name for quietly resigning for him on principle because of what he's done and how he's treated more than me, certainly Del and Doug, but it's more than just the three of us.

So finally they said, "And he said that he told you when you resigned that he was turning over a new leaf." Well, that was the day before. And I've had it, and I said—it just came out, I didn't think about it, it just came out when they said that, I said, "Well, you know, Marion has turned over so many leaves, so many new leaves, that he could foliate an entire forest," and they printed it over and over again. And he called me 2, 3 weeks later and said, "Would you quit saying that?" "You really called me to just ask me that. That was sort of nervy." And I said, "Marion, I've only said it once. They keep playing it again. I can't tell them not to play a quote that was a quote." He said, "You really said that?" I said, "Well, I said it because it's true."

INTERVIEWER: And you had said it to him as well.

MAX BERRY: Yeah, I said it to him as well. So, you know, looking back, I remember Effi's statement about putting his feet up on the table. You know, whenever I would see Marion at things, I was more friendly to him than he was to me. He was always looking at me like I was a traitor, and it had nothing to do with morality or what's right or wrong, it had to do with loyalty, and if you weren't loyal, you were just bad no matter what the reasons were. And I even understood that. And I still liked the guy. I'm sorry he died. I'm not surprised. I thought he would die sooner because of his habits. His habits were terrible.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, god, he never took care of himself.

MAX BERRY: He didn't. I mean, he drank too much, played around too much. I mean, he wasn't careful. He wasn't sanitary. And I would talk to him about it like a father.

INTERVIEWER: And then also he had diabetes, and he certainly didn't eat properly.

MAX BERRY: I know. Yeah. No, no. No, and I really am amazed—you know, he was my age, and I'm 79, I think he lived longer than I thought he would live. And I really miss him. He was the most colorful—definitely the most colorful, figure in D.C. history. I think he's going to go down as a folk hero.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MAX BERRY: I don't think he deserves that completely because—and maybe all folk heroes have a little scoundrel in them. But one thing I'll say about Marion that's different from other political scoundrels. He was, to my mind, never dishonest with money.

INTERVIEWER: Never.

MAX BERRY: He was never graft—he didn't want payoffs.

INTERVIEWER: Never. Never.

MAX BERRY: His fault was probably trying to help friends too much—

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MAX BERRY: —who used him, took advantage of him, and I think he wasn't strong enough—I think he was smart enough to see he was being used, but I don't think he was strong enough to say no to people that were friends.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MAX BERRY: And some people did do quite well, lawyers and—

INTERVIEWER: Billionaires. One billionaire we can both think of. Yeah.

MAX BERRY: Absolutely. The same thing happened to John Wilson and people taking advantage of him.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Well, that's great, Max. Thank you ever so much.